



# BETTER LIVING

A three-storey Victorian house has been remodelled and redesigned to help the family get the most out of it.

**G**enerous proportions, three storeys, lots of light and high ceilings are all desirable characteristics of early Victorian properties, but these qualities mean nothing if the interiors are sub-standard and don't reflect the inhabitants' lifestyle. One such property in the fashionable Notting Hill area of London had been partially refurbished some years ago, but the home did not suit the needs of the family.

The challenge was to find a scheme that would modernise the unsatisfactory design, bringing in a touch of contemporary style and at the same time unifying the family's large collection of antique heirlooms and art collection.

Unfortunately much of the existing space was uninviting and therefore underused, including a large double room on the ground floor. Together with architect Stephen Brandes and interior designer Helene Dabrowski, the family spent time carefully considering how they intended to use their home to its full potential.

The considerable number of traditional architectural features was to be retained, and many of the existing fittings, such as the bathrooms and kitchens, could be reused.



It soon became clear that the family spent most of their time in the basement for day-to-day living, and so this was divided into three distinct areas: dining, kitchen and TV. The existing kitchen carcasses, some of the worktops and appliances were retained, but the cupboard doors – these were dark walnut, a colour too oppressive for the space – were replaced with painted doors, choosing to use this stunning wood instead for the breakfast bar worktop, adding some warmth.

The splashback was tiled in Fired Earth Natural History plain and patterned dragonfly tiles, for a touch of quirkiness and to pick out some of the detail from the blind fabric.

A new TV unit was constructed to house all DVDs, CDs and the three children's toys, and the custom-made large curved sofa has been upholstered in Pierre Frey's Boussac Taiga fake suede, designed to follow the shape of the bay window.

The little-used ground floor was to become an area for relaxing, mainly in the evening or to entertain, and a library/music room. The existing furniture dictated a more traditional design, which called for elaborate curtain treatments that are unfussy yet elegant, and the existing Lassco parquet flooring was darkly stained to create a contrast.



The drawing room was painted in a soothing blue, complemented by warm gold and raspberry coloured fabrics, and a light and fresh curtain fabric for the bay window overlooking the garden.

In the adjoining library, tall custom-made, hand-painted bookcases with verre eglomise panels (glass gilded with gold leaf) were added to house the family's ever increasing book collection. This room was also going to be used as a music room, with the possible addition of a grand piano in the future.

The first floor was to be for the children, with three bedrooms, a playroom and two bathrooms, and the second floor was to be the master bedroom with walk-in wardrobe, en suite bathroom and a study.

The master bedroom was quite small, and so a sense of height was created with a bed canopy, providing a luxurious and soft backdrop with a Japanese Zen feel.

Much of the project was about getting different colours to flow together throughout the house using cleverly crafted harmonies. One colour which proved to be the dominating force was aqua blue which was then used on the stair runner to create a majestic entrance.

## MEET THE DESIGNER

Helene Dabrowski hails from Paris and has been in the interior design industry for the past 20 years. Her passions for colour and fabric have led her to work both in Paris and London with the likes of Emily Todhunter, Magda D'Auzers and Clifton Interiors.

She set up her own design practice 10 years ago, working on projects ranging from one room to more ambitious schemes including complete refurbishments and new builds.

Colour is a great aspect of her design, layering colours to bring complexity and strength to enhance the architecture of each room.

**Helene Dabrowski Interiors**  
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## \* CONTACTS

**Kitchen**  
**SOFA** Helene Dabrowski Interiors' own design  
**SOFA FABRIC** Boussac Taiga: [www.pierrefrey.com](http://www.pierrefrey.com)  
**CUSHIONS:** [www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)  
**WALL COLOUR** Leather II: [www.paintlibrary.co.uk](http://www.paintlibrary.co.uk)  
**TILES** Fired Earth: [www.firedearth.com](http://www.firedearth.com)

**Library**  
**BOOKCASES** Helene Dabrowski Interiors  
**PAINT COLOUR** Slate II and Ghost: [www.paintlibrary.co.uk](http://www.paintlibrary.co.uk)  
**CURTAIN FABRIC** Barberini Silk: [www.jagtar.com](http://www.jagtar.com)

**Master bedroom**  
**CURTAINS AND BED CANOPY** Ikebana porcelain: [www.knowles-christou.com](http://www.knowles-christou.com)  
**BEDSPREAD AND CUSHIONS:** [www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)  
**BEDSIDE TABLE** Mimi in painted mirrored glass: [www.knowles-christou.com](http://www.knowles-christou.com)  
**BEDSIDE LAMPS** Beluga: [www.bestandlloyd.co.uk](http://www.bestandlloyd.co.uk)  
**WALLPAPER** Nirvana: [www.elitis.fr](http://www.elitis.fr)

## \* GET THE LOOK

**Fab footstool**  
This Lucca ottoman from John Lewis has generous dimensions (81cm wide x 54cm deep) and rich striped fabric. Its birch legs have a walnut finish. There are sofas, armchairs and chaise longues also as part of the range. Price £350. [www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)



**Crystal candle chandelier**  
The Delliah antique brass crystal candle chandelier has six candle arms, and is available in various sizes. Price from £595. [www.alexanderandpearl.co.uk](http://www.alexanderandpearl.co.uk)



**Marble surround**  
The Thomas Hope English-style marble chimney-piece denotes timeless classic style. Made from top quality stone, each piece is finished by hand, and costs £1,779 plus VAT. [www.acquisitions.co.uk](http://www.acquisitions.co.uk)

